

Congressman Todd Akin (R-MO), Ranking Member of the Seapower and Expeditionary Forces Subcommittee and member of the House Science Committee today joined former astronauts Neil Armstrong, James Lovell and Eugene Cernan in urging President Obama to reconsider cancellation of NASA's Constellation program along with its Ares rockets and Orion spacecraft. The former Astronauts sent a letter to President Obama Tuesday, urging the administration to reconsider cancellation of NASA's replacement of its space shuttle. The following is Akin's statement today regarding the proposal:

"America's accomplishments in space exploration have long been a source of pride and inspiration. It is an endeavor that has spanned every administration since President Eisenhower's. As a result of the necessity of building new technology as well as maintaining our nations leading role in exploration and launch capability, NASA's manned flight mission has traditionally received broad bipartisan support.

"The decision by the Obama administration to gut NASA's manned flight program does more than jeopardize the long term goals of solar system exploration, the cancellation of the space shuttles replacement will effectively leave the United States reliant upon the Russian Federation to grant us access to low earth orbit. As a member of the Armed Services Committee I am very concerned with that possibility, and as an American I am disappointed by the prospect.

"From an industrial base perspective, this decision could have some daunting ramifications. NASA and the Department of Defense share a strategically important industrial base, which are large-scale rocket motors (SRMs).

If cancellation of Constellation and Ares 1 and Ares 5 occurs, it will be the first time in 46 years that we do not have any DoD or NASA production to sustain this vital defense and space industrial base.

“Several Administration witnesses have testified this year that it is a major defense problem. General Kevin Chilton, Commander, U.S. Strategic Command said he would “flag” two areas of the industrial base as essential to his mission. One is the continued production of solid rocket propellant and motors, which will take a big hit with the end of shuttle missions and completion of the Minuteman III revamp. Ceding space capabilities to Russia and China which will have more robust manned space programs than the U.S., will lead to foreign perceptions of a weakened and less-capable United States, which has negative impacts on our economy and foreign relations, and contribute to the image of the U.S. in decline.”